



NEWS

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas ***L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2nd District***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 14, 2009

Contact: Aurelio Rojas 213-974-2222

James Bolden 213-200-5314

RIDLEY-THOMAS APPLAUDS BOARD'S SUPPORT URGING FIRST 5 LA TO PRESERVE BLACK INFANT HEALTH PROGRAM

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today applauded Board Chairman Don Knabe's support for a request to First 5 LA to consider an annual agreement of \$766,058 with the county to support five community-based agencies that provide services to address disparities in birth outcomes among African American women.

A motion by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas that will be heard Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors urges the panel to direct the county Department of Public Health to use the First 5 LA funds as a match to draw down approximately \$575,713 in additional federal funds to support the effort to close the \$1.3 million local budget gap.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas thanked Board Chairman Don Knabe, who chairs the First 5 LA Commission, for his support. Supervisor Knabe recognizes the importance of the Black Infant Health Program -- a program in his district is administered by the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services -- and his support will be pivotal when the Board takes up the motion.

"The impact the State budget crisis will have on children and families in need is starting to emerge," said Supervisor Knabe. "I will be directing First 5 LA to look at ways to mitigate this impact, and the preservation of this critical program will be a top priority."

On July 28, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an amendment to the Budget Act of 2009 in order to close a \$60 billion budget gap. This amendment called for eliminating State General Funds for various programs including the Black Infant Health Program (\$3.9 million statewide).

Los Angeles County received \$1.3 million to support five community-based agencies to provide services to pregnant and parenting African Americans.

“These cuts will directly affect African American women in poverty that are currently being assisted throughout their pregnancy,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. “This could result in an increase in infant mortality, and an increase in the disparities in birth outcomes between African Americans and other race/ethnicities in Los Angeles County.”

The motion states that a “loss of this magnitude in funding will mean elimination of services to approximately 671 clients, and will stress the service systems currently in place in the First 5 LA Best Babies Collaboratives.”